

## “Professional, approachable, and fair” – Students’ perceptions of the vocational education teacher’s authority

Anne Koski-Heikkinen<sup>1</sup>  
Kaarina Määttä<sup>2</sup>  
Satu Uusiautti<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

How do students perceive vocational education teachers and their authority? The purpose of this study was to describe the vocational education teacher’s authority and the basis of authority relationship. Finnish vocational education students (N = 65) were recruited in this study. They were asked to write about vocational education teachers through a method of empathy-based stories. The students depicted the authority relationship by describing a good or unsuccessful teacher’s actions in vocational teaching situations. The data were analyzed with qualitative content analysis method. In the students’ writings, the teacher authority were viewed from four dimensions that were pedagogical skills, professional expertise, social skills, and personal characteristics. Based on the results, a typology of vocational education teacher’s authority was created and presented in this article. The typology can be used in teacher training and as a tool for vocational education teachers to contemplate on their position and to develop a functional authority relationship with vocational education students.

**Keywords:** vocational education, vocational education teacher, vocational education student, professional identity, teacherhood, teacher authority, method of empathy-based stories

### Introduction

Vocational education in Finland and abroad has been renewed along with learning at work (Billett 2008) and versatile learning environments (e.g., Arquero and Romero-Frías 2013; Cruce, Wolniak, Seifert, and Pascarella 2006; Niemi and Multisilta 2014) have become important in vocational development. Finland is not the only country rapidly changing vocational education, but for example Denmark (Nordman-Byskata 2008), Poland (Bin Mahfooz and Hovde 2010), and

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<sup>1</sup> PhD, Head of vocational education and Study advisor, Kainuu Vocational College, Kajaani, Finland, [Anne.Koski-Heikkinen@kao.fi](mailto:Anne.Koski-Heikkinen@kao.fi).

<sup>2</sup> PhD, Professor, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland, [Kaarina.Maatta@ulapland.fi](mailto:Kaarina.Maatta@ulapland.fi).

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Researcher, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland, [satu@uusiautti.fi](mailto:satu@uusiautti.fi)

Germany (Barabasch and Watt-Malcolm 2012; Hoeckel and Schwartz 2010) have been renewing their education systems.

In Finland, students applying for vocational education are quite heterogeneous by their backgrounds and learning skills (e.g., Cantell 2013). In daily teaching situations in vocational schools, teachers have to reflect their positions (McLaughlin 1999; Sanders and Mumford 2005) and be constantly sensitive to new demands. These demands cover both teachers' work and teacher training. For example, Maaranen (2009, 94) points out that "more intense research on reflection would be beneficial. Ways to promote reflection at the education stage should be sought" (p. 94). She concludes that "so, they [teachers] can provide the best teaching and caring to children and adolescents, and be able to look after themselves, as well" (p. 95). Indeed, teaching in today's changing world is not easy if collaboration with students does not function and support well-being of both (e.g., Määttä and Uusiautti 2012; Uusiautti and Määttä 2013).

Teacherhood lies in the core of all teaching, also in vocational education. Previous studies on the basic factors of vocational education teacherhood are relatively scarce (see e.g., Grollmann 2008; Heikkinen 1997; Koski-Heikkinen 2014), while teacherhood research has been more focused on basic education (see Määttä and Uusiautti 2011). In Finland, Vähäsantanen (2013) has studied vocational education teacherhood by noting that it covers both individual (e.g., professional identity, expertise, and work experience) and social (e.g., organization administration style, professional relationships, and students) resources. Koskela (2003) did research on students who are perceived challenging by vocational education teachers and on what factors explain the engagement of students of vocational education. Koskela (2003) also analyzed the nature of expertise required in vocational education teachers' work (see also Farnsworth and Higman 2012; Grollmann 2008; Hagera, 2005). In addition to teaching skills, vocational education teachers need good interaction skills, skills related to encounters with various students, and negotiations skills (see Koski-Heikkinen 2014; Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto 2011).

How do students perceive the primary task of vocational education teachers? How do they evaluate the teacher's expertise and success in teaching? Although students' ability to see teacherhood can be narrow, their perceptions reveal something about what kinds of teachers inspire students and make them succeed. What kind of an authority position does a vocational education teacher who produces good learning outcomes have? This article is based on a study by Dr. Anne Koski-Heikkinen (2014) who analyzed ideal vocational education teacherhood in her doctoral research.

## Teacher Authority

A teacher's work can be described as an interaction relationship between a teacher and a student, tinged with authority imbalance. This relationship has been perceived especially complicated and vacillating, even susceptible to conflicts (e.g., Waller 1932/1961; Yariv 2009). The authority relationship has been viewed in various ways: Durkheim considered it through the core of education as socialization into the prevailing collective behaviors and thinking within each society. John Dewey, on the other hand, saw the authority relationship constructing via meaningful education and schooling (VanderStaay et al. 2009; see also Dewey 2005/1916; Dill 2007; Durkheim 1956).

Peters (1973) has defined the authority relationship by leaning on social order and rules directing it. Max Weber considers authority as the manifestation of power that makes a person able to get others act as the person wants regardless of resistance. Power is based on commanding that is perceived legitimate. Weber distinguishes three principles of legitimate authority based on tradition, charisma, or law (Gjerstad 2009; Pellegrino 2009).

Pace and Hemmings (2007) state that research analyzing authority in the school context often is based on the aforementioned sociological or educational-political viewpoints. Although these starting points are justified in some cases, they do not pay attention sufficiently to the interaction that is influenced by individuals' emotional states, rapidly-changing situations, and complexity. Määttä and Uusiautti (2012) connect authority with pedagogical love in their conceptual analysis. The teacher's role has changed from distributing of information into guiding and mentoring. Due to this development, teachers are no longer considered omniscient, but their personalities as teachers are becoming emphasized more. Pedagogical love and authority is, at their best, expressed as trust and belief in students' talents and abilities to learn, leading to a positive learning environment. A positive, encouraging learning atmosphere contributes to the authority relationship between a teacher and students in a strengthening manner.

Tzuo and Chen (2011) views the authority relationship from socio-constructivist and critical perspectives. Both viewpoints include traditional understandings of learning and teaching. According to a socio-constructivist viewpoint (e.g., Dewey 1998; Oyler 1996; Pace and Hemmings 2006; Yariv 2009), the teacher has the opportunity to construct a functional authority relationship that is based on the student's personality and supports the student's learning. The critical viewpoint focuses on the students' mutual relationships in teaching situations. Tzuo and Chen (2011) describe the critical viewpoint with concepts of empowerment, justice, and reciprocity. The teacher can

create a democratic culture in learning situations, letting everyone be leaders in turn. Thus, the teacher can attempt to create sense of justice in the classroom (see e.g., Burbules 1995; Raelin 2009; Spilt and Koomen 2009). The idea is that each student would become heard as an individual. Reciprocity is fulfilled through an equal dialogue between a teacher and students, in which each other's opinions and feelings are respected (see also Clegg 1994; Crawford 2008; Foucault 1980; Graue 2005; Kincheloe 2008; LeBlanc and Bearison 2004). Tzuo and Chen (2011) ended up forming a third viewpoint based on the earlier two: by combining the socio-constructivist and critical viewpoints, they assume that students become noticed as individuals and as members of a group. The viewpoint is called "re-conceptualized teacher authority".

## Method

The purpose of this article is to describe the vocational education teacher's authority and the basis of authority relationship based on students' perceptions. The following research question was set for this study: What factors does the vocational education teacher's authority consist of as described by students?

To answer this question, a method of empathy-based stories (see Eskola 1997; see also Sarivaara, Määttä and Uusiautti 2014) was selected as a data collection method. The research participants were recruited by selecting randomly one Finnish vocational education institution. Altogether, 65 vocational education students depicted the authority relationship by describing a good or unsuccessful teacher's actions in vocational teaching situations.

Eskola (1997) used written frame stories to ignite and obtain participants' thoughts. According to Eskola and Suoranta (2008), the method is quite usable when the purpose is to analyze people's thoughts and perceptions of a certain phenomenon or to analyze the logic of their thinking. The key element in the method is therefore the frame stories which is called "orientation" (see also Lehtomäki et al. 2013). Based on the impression provided by orientation, research participants are asked to describe how the plot continues, or what could have or must have happened before the situation illustrated in orientation. Frame stories are descriptions of possible events, of something that can happen (e.g., Juntunen and Saarti 2000; Lahelma and Gordon 1997).

This method allows the participants to define what they want to include in their stories and how. However, their written stories are always linked with their previous experiences, and, therefore, their writings also necessitate role-taking either from their own or someone else's point of view. The frame stories used among research participants always have some variation. Two or more versions of the same story are conducted, differing from each other by a very relevant item in story.

Each participant writes based on just one frame story without being aware of other versions. Thus, the researcher knows what changes in the research participants' answers when something in frame stories changes (Eskola 1997).

This study used two frame stories. The first one was as follows:

*Imagine, that Hannah / Mike studies for her / his last year at a vocational school. Her / His studies have gone well and she / he is satisfied with her/his education and that she / he is well-prepared professionally.*

*In Hannah's / Mike's opinion, the most important vocational education teacher to her / him knows teaching well. During this teacher's lessons, students learn the basics of the vocation and the teacher enjoys Hannah's / Mike's respect.*

*Write a description of what this good teacher is like and how this teacher acts, because Hannah / Mike tells that she / he has learned well and is satisfied with education and her / his teacher.*

The second frame story described an opposite situation:

*Imagine, that Hannah / Mike studies for her/his last year at a vocational school. Her / His studies have not gone well and she/he is dissatisfied with her/his vocational education.*

*In Hannah's / Mike's opinion, the most important vocational education teacher to her / him is not doing teaching well. During this teacher's lessons, students do not learn the basics of the vocation, nor does the teacher enjoy Hannah's / Mike's respect.*

*Write a description of what this bad teacher is like and how this teacher acts, because Hannah / Mike tells that she / he has not learned well and is dissatisfied with education and her / his teacher.*

The data were analyzed with the qualitative content analysis method, by categorizing stories into themes, looking for text excerpts describing a vocational education teacher's behavior in teaching situations. After this phase, the data were further categorized finally ending up with a typology of vocational education teacher's authority (see e.g., Creswell, 2009).

When evaluating the reliability of this research, the concepts of qualitative study can be used. The purpose of the frame stories were to obtain descriptions of real life through role-taking (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011). Students were asked to analyze vocational education teachers' characteristics and behaviors. The written descriptions were used for discussing the authority relationship between a vocational education teacher and students. The most crucial issue in analyzing data like these is the correspondence of writings with the reality. The researcher has to evaluate the trustworthiness of data. On the one hand, the researcher had a long background in

vocational education, and therefore, she was able to analyze whether the stories provided by students corresponded to reality or not. In addition, this study was strongly theory-led, and the results were therefore analyzed within the framework of existing theories. The results were constantly compared to relevant studies and theories in the field to form a reliable and applicable picture of the vocational education teacher's authority. The data excerpts included in the results section illustrate how the students described vocational education teachers in their written stories. The data excerpts give voice to the data, and importantly, show readers how the students' perceptions were interpreted in this study.

## **Results**

In the students' writings, the teacher authority was, on the one hand, described widely in general, and, on the other hand, the writings included very detailed descriptions about the teaching work and the teacher's position. Here, the perceptions were categorized into four main categories: pedagogical skills, professional expertise, social skills, and personal characteristics.

### ***Pedagogical Skills***

The core of a vocational education teacher's work consists of pedagogical skills. For example, Helakorpi (2010) distinguishes teaching and guidance from educational skills as components of pedagogical skills. A vocational education teacher has to be able to empathetic interaction as well as to possess human relationships skills and show genuine interest in human beings. In this study, the students' writings were analyzed from the point of view of educational skills, and when discussing the teacher's professional expertise, the findings are viewed in the light of teaching and guidance skills.

The data implied that the vocational education teacher's authority was the most strongly directed by value-based education including teaching, guidance, and motivating skills. Vocational education teachers strengthen their authority by guiding students to appreciate the professional qualification provided by education and helping them to survive in the work life and life in general during and after vocational education. Teachers educate their students for life alongside vocational education, and they need profound pedagogical skills to create such robust values to students that will help them in their daily work after graduation. Students included counselling and motivating skills in the teacher authority:

*The teacher has coached us well to work life and with the basics needed for surviving alive in the cement jungle.*

(Student no. 9)

The students appreciated and were motivated by teachers who are authentic. These teachers openly and vividly share their concrete life experiences, including failures and previous careers. Teachers' stories about their lives illustrate issues to be taught, but they also provide guidelines in life and advice. Students learn to understand that no one can be perfect.

*The teacher has an amazing talent to make us forget all other businesses through discussing, and thus make students to focus on studying.* (Student no. 11)

Through good guidance and dialogue, the teacher's shows appreciation of the student's values but also his or her own values as well. The teaching atmosphere becomes encouraging, confidential, understanding, and motivating to learn. Teachers who have knowledge of human nature and are sensitive to others' needs can notice students equally and listen to them actively. Then, the teacher authority becomes a salient factor of creating a sense of security and trust in students.

The students were not so much interested in the teacher's age but the teacher's ability to update and bring out his or her values within the prevailing social norms. In addition, the students seemed to respect teachers who express their willingness to increase their knowledge of students, for example, by participating in the joint events with the class.

*The teacher knows how to seize the moment...* (Student no. 59)

### ***Professional Expertise***

The students in this study were able to describe the teacher's professional expertise in a manner rich in nuance simultaneously illustrating the everyday life in vocational education. According to the writings, a vocational education teacher's professional expertise is manifested as mastery over relevant knowledge and skills and the ability to transmit them in teaching.

Good and quality teaching skills were mentioned in most writings already in the beginning, which implies that these factors are especially important for the professional expertise in vocational education teachers. The students do not only end up stating that the teacher teaches well, but they also explain and describe the quality characteristics of a good vocational education teacher's teaching skills.

*Lessons were diversified; we had good conversations about several issues. The teacher was interested in our opinions, and even if the themes were discussed from the paper, by reading, we learned these things much better by discussing and vocalizing them.* (Student no. 63)

A strong vocational expertise provides the teacher with an opportunity to form a respected authority and related functional authority relationship. Students test teachers' expertise by their own

action during the first lessons. If teachers' do well in these so-called test situations, the impression students will have about teachers lays the foundation to the teacher authority and the quality of the authority relationship.

*Although at the beginning, the students tested what they can say to the teacher and how they can behave, the teacher stayed calm and assertive and not being "a friend" by the Teacher. Soon, everyone learned to respect the teacher considering the teacher fair and righteous. (Student no. 63)*

After these test situations, the students start to pay attention to the quality factors of teaching, such as variation in lessons, systematic organization of learning contents, teachers' updated expertise, graphicness of teaching, punctuality, class management, and motivation enhancement. Teachers' expertise was evaluated in the light of these factors. In addition, students evaluated the pedagogical education their teachers had. The more the students found teaching pleasing and enhancing their learning, the better teacher training they thought their teachers had had.

*The student feels sometimes that the teacher has gotten the teacher qualification from the packet of cereal. But even if the teacher does mistakes in teaching, the student does not bother correcting the teacher's words. Lessons consist of not more than the teacher's summaries copied from the text book. Theory books are like Hebrew to the teacher, and the teacher cannot even explain the students what the lesson is about in the first place. (Student no. 18)*

### **Social Skills**

Successful learning is also based on positive interaction between several people, and therefore, good social skills have an important part of learning. The students in this research emphasized teachers' social skills in creating and maintaining benign interaction. Friendliness and genuine care appeared as the basic requirement in a good learning atmosphere. Such teachers listen to students and talk with them. Students get a feeling of being appreciated by teachers, which can lead to the emergence of reciprocal appreciation and respect. This kind of mutual appreciation also tells about positive teacher authority.

*The student told that the teacher plays a big role in studies gone badly. The teacher does not notice the student, does not listen when the student tries to ask a question; and if the teacher heard, the teacher still would not answer. The teacher does not give any advice, and that is why the student has not succeeded in studies. (Student no. 4)*

In teaching situations in which the teacher is grumpy and grave, students find the atmosphere discouraging. Good mood in teacher, on the other hand, promotes the functional, positive interaction and learning atmosphere.



*First and foremost, the teacher is flexible, relaxed, and nice, also has a sense of humor. The teacher loses the serious face and teaching is nicer both to the teacher and the students when things are not with smiles on everyone's faces.* (Student no. 45)

Being in a good mood brings out an impression of the teacher being fair and living with the spirit of the class, but it does not prevent the teacher to keep up rules and discipline:

*The student X is one of the teacher Y's students, and the student has been really satisfied with the teacher who has patiently watched their joyful group and lived with them. The teacher has not be stressed for minor things but given feedback when necessary, and the boys have understood that alright...* (Student no. 23)

Teachers' good social skills help creating successful interaction situations that enhance the emergence of a safe atmosphere, which can, hence, arouse reciprocal friendly feelings in teachers and students. The students in this study compared such friendly feelings even to friendships, but supposedly they did not mean actual friendships as relationship, but merely a friend-like attitude toward each other. This type of friendship can be seen as the component of the authority relationship, when the concept of friendship illustrates the student's appreciation toward the teacher and vice versa.

*The teacher never leaves students in trouble, but helps them to cope with stress by giving advice and directions. Students always want to participate in the teacher's lessons, and thus there are no unnecessary absenteeism, which influences learning. The teacher is someone I will miss after graduating from the school.* (Student no. 11)

### ***Teacher's Personal Characteristics***

In this study, the students described teachers' personal characteristics mainly through teachers' action and behaviors comparing these with teachers' personal ways of acting. Vocational education teachers' ability to bring out their personal characteristics in teaching situations appeared in this study as a very significant part of teacher authority. Teachers' personal characteristics contribute to the authority relationship considerably. Based on the students' descriptions, for example, tones and intensity of teachers' speech, body language, and expressions revealed to the students how a teacher is like by his or her personal qualities. This was interpreted so that the students generally saw the teacher's outward behavior as manifestation of the teacher's personal characteristics that can either strengthen or weaken the teacher's authority position.

*You can see that the teacher does not enjoy the work at all, always giving a face... nor am I interested in concentrating on listening the teacher's complains. "Do this, do that, don't just stand there doing nothing, go RIGTH AWAY to do this!"* (Student no. 40)

Teachers' behavior was also evaluated from the ethical point of view. Students' experiences and interpretations lead to assumptions. For example, students can think that a teacher has compiled lists of favorite students based on their interest in particular students. If a student thinks that the teacher is not interested in himself or herself, the student will not be interested in the teacher either. This can lay a weak foundation to the teacher authority, and the authority relationship can become dissatisfying:

*My vocational education teacher is unsympathetic, does not notice me, and watches out for some students. The teacher does not consider students equal, or this is the impression I and the rest of the class have. (Student no. 24)*

*The teacher has "pets" in the class, which leaves the student X and others without attention and teaching. (Student no. 16)*

The students used their interpretations also to predict the smoothness of forthcoming lessons. They reflected all that teachers had said or done to foresee what teachers are likely to do. These deliberations create and manifest the students' impression of the teacher's authority position and of the authority relationship between them and teachers.

*Who finds anything the teacher says interesting, because everyone knows that the teacher will just yell, complain, and slag off as if we had done poorly! (Student no. 40)*

*The teacher treats the student like a baby, so they do not get along very well... At times, the student feels that the teacher watches out just because the student happens to have strong opinions... Because of this one teacher, whole school going is a pain. (Student no. 18)*

In their writings, the student emphasized a relaxed teaching style and, especially, a sense of motivation, inspiration, and joy in teaching situations. They appreciated vocational education teachers' meticulous and responsible devotion to teaching. Simultaneously, this appreciation was related to teachers' self-appreciation: if teachers show self-respect and self-appreciation, their own personality and work, students interpret this as appreciation toward themselves.

*My vocational education teacher is professional, approachable, and fair – and nice. I liked to go this teacher's lessons, because I knew I would get quality teaching and understand even the most difficult issues eventually. (Student no. 21)*

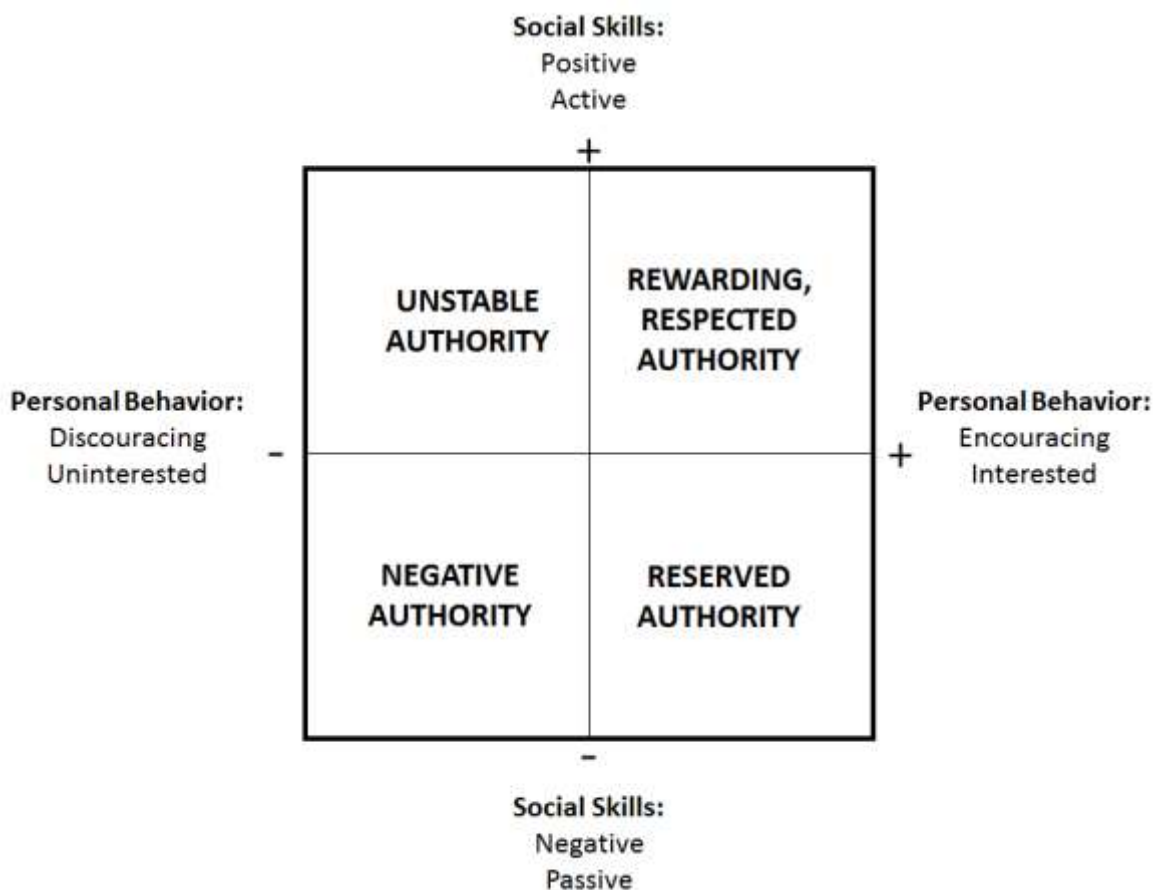
## **Discussion**

The results showed that the authority is based on a functional interaction created and maintained by a vocational education teacher's personal characteristics and good interaction skills. Teachers' earn students' respect by their behavior, and it also ignites respect for the field in students. Teachers can

create a safe learning atmosphere by genuine and caring behavior and by enhancing relaxed situations that allow every student to talk about their thoughts and experiences. A functional authority relationship provides an opportunity to creative teaching that respects the institutional values and complies with the teacher's own personal style in an ethically sustainable manner. Giving room for one's previous experiences and sharing them openly contributes not only to the interaction relationship with students but also gives concrete and practical examples and advice that are especially important in vocational education (see e.g., Enlund, Luokkanen and Feld 2013).

Based on this study, the vocational education teacher's authority and the authority relationship between teacher and students are defined by three factors: the teacher's personal behavior, the functional interaction atmosphere and its maintenance, and successful teaching and education situations. These factors can be further summoned into two dimensions: personal behavior and social skills (see also Yariv 2009). Figure 1 illustrates the dimensions and authority types created by the variation between these dimensions. It is worth noticing that none of these types probably appear purely, but a teacher's authority develops and changes by contexts. Next, we will introduce the types in detail.

Figure 1. The vocational education teacher's authority types



### ***Reserved Authority***

The personal behavior of this vocational education teacher is suitable in the students' eyes. The teacher encourages and tries to show interest in student, but the teacher's social skills do not enhance teaching situations. The teacher's professional expertise manifests itself as inflexible lessons and strictly following the teaching materials. The teacher is also inflexible with students, and may appear negative and unsociable. There are no interaction during lessons, due to which the teacher remains distant to students. Students do not perceive the teacher as guide or educator of profession and life. The authority relationship is developing, immature, and fragile.

### ***Unstable Authority***

In principle, the teaching situations have positive and active interaction, but the vocational education teacher's personal behavior is not appropriate or sensible from students' perspective. The teacher's professionalism is not evident. The teacher can make students stay and even enjoy themselves in teaching situations but through other factors than the teacher's professional expertise or pedagogical skills. Teaching situations often include tasks irrelevant to theme (e.g., browsing the Internet without educational purpose). The teacher can also have vivid lectures about his or her interests, but students do not find them relevant for their profession or life in general. In these situations, the teacher does not have the students' respect leaving the authority position very frail, even null. The chances for developing authority relationship are suspicious because the teacher's personality remains strange to students.

### ***Negative Authority***

The vocational education teacher's personal behavior is not suitable for the teaching situations (e.g., tardiness, unpunctuality, carelessness, and bad moods expressed by gestures and faces), and the teacher's social skills are weak. The teacher does not show any interest in work and students. The teacher's behavior does not manifest professionalism or willingness to create close interaction with students in teaching situations. Students are not motivated in learning the profession, they are not attentive, or skip the teacher's lessons. Neither the teacher nor the students seem to respect the vocational field to be taught. The chances of developing a strong teacher authority and quality authority relationship are minimal, because students do not see much to respect in the teacher.

### ***Rewarding Authority***

Students experience learning situations meaningful which shows as good learning results. The teacher's personal behavior pleases students and with good social skills, the teacher creates an interaction atmosphere that enhances learning. The teacher respects students, and the students appreciate the teacher's all actions in teaching situations. The teacher represents an ideal to them, both as a person and as a professional in the field. The teacher's authority position is strong, and the authority relationship between the teacher and students is functional. The chances of development exist and are positive. Students respect the teacher who is motivated and willing to develop his or her work.

### **Conclusion**

Määttä and Uusiautti (2012, 29) have defined the relationship between a teacher's pedagogical love and authority as follows: "If pedagogical love and pedagogical authority are based on expertise-based respect, the learning atmosphere is warm and encouraging. Mutual respect supports empathy; students respect the teacher because of his or her expertise and regard the teacher as a sort of safe mainstay that they can rely on. The teacher trusts and believes in the students' abilities, respects their individuality, and helps them to enhance their balanced development and find their own strengths." They place tact (see also van Manen 1991) as the key element that helps the teacher to interact with and select suitable way of approaching different students in different learning situations. The findings of this study support the notion: the teacher's personal behavior and social skills from the students' point of view are the manifestation of the teacher's tact. Overall, tactful teachers are professional and engaged in promoting learning. However, teachers must also show trust in the value of teachers' work, and must believe that their efforts can have an influence on students' lives.

Indeed, the changing world necessitates new kind of authority from teachers in vocational education. Teachers' personal characteristics are molded and evaluated over and over again in situations in which teachers face the heterogeneous students group. On the issue of teacher education, educating someone to become a good teacher is very similar to helping him or her to have a good personality (see Määttä and Uusiautti, 2012), and when considered from the perspective of this study, to help teachers to bring their personal experiences and characteristics as a natural part of teaching.

Teacherhood, including teacher authority, emerges and develops when teachers themselves actively and determinedly participate in analyzing and developing their work. Collaboration and mentoring skills are probably at the very core of the renewing teacherhood (see e.g., Simpson and Beckett

2013; Woolley, Chabris, Pentland, Hashmi and Malone 2010). Indeed, the powerful expansion of learning environments, effective electric communication, and increase in individualized education possibilities demand that teachers pay increasing attention to the constant change in their teaching work (e.g., Cedefop 2009; Young 2000).

In sum, research on students' perceptions of teacher authority in vocational education contribute to development of the education level. Teaching practices leading to good learning outcomes and favorable experiences can be modeled and introduced in education institutions (see also Faraday, Overton and Cooper 2011; Kostera and Dengerink 2008; Lucas, Spencer and Claxton 2012). The typology in presented in this article can be used in teacher training and as a tool for vocational education teachers to contemplate on their position. The typology gives voice to students' experience of vocational education—which is the most valuable voice to listen, if we want to provide create vocational education as a place of respectful and appreciate encounters. In vocational education particularly, teachers' professional expertise and authority combined with their social skills and tact can have a specifically important role in students' success in their vocational studies and in life in general.

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